DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 294 210 CS 211 195

AUTHOR Meerson, Mary Lou
TITLE Integrating the Language Arts: Alternatives and Strategies Using Trade Books as Models for Student Writing.
PUB DATE May 88
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association (33rd, Toronto, Canada, May 1-6, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Childrens Literature; Content Area Writing; Language Arts; Literary Devices; Literature Appreciation; Models; *Reading Writing Relationship; Teaching Methods; Writing Improvement; *Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS Beginning Writing; *Trade Books; Writing Tasks; *Writing through Literature Instruction

ABSTRACT

Although teachers are often told to use literature as models for students' writing, they are rarely provided with specific suggestions on how, when, and why to use literature, or trade books, in their curriculum. Yet there are many situations in which the use of literature can be helpful to the novice writer. With pre-kindergarten or kindergarten children, teachers can help students build schema by writing books themselves. This type of schema building continues at all levels, and is assisted by books about books, such as "Harold and the Purple Crayon" and "Simon's Book." The technique of "copy change," using a story as the basis for writing a similar story, helps children develop their personal voice, and can be used at any level. For older students who are less confident of their writing ability, books such as "How To Write Secret Codes" and "How To Draw Cartoons" are effective in easing their anxiety by providing "how to" practice. Other suggestions for employing literature as a model for student writing include using trade books to teach literary devices ("The Diary of Anne Frank" for diaries, and "Science Experiments You Can Eat" for content area writing), and writing book extensions (prologues or epilogues for books, new stories for well-known characters, or changing the setting of a story). (An annotated bibliography of trade books is appended.) (MM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED294210

Integrating the Language Arts

Alternatives and Strategies

Using Trade Books as Models for Student Writing

Mary Lou Meerson

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Mary Lou Meerson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS 211 195

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

INTEGRATING THE LANGUAGE ARTS:ALTERNATIVES AND STRATEGIES
USING TRADE BOOKS AS MODELS FOR STUDENT WRITING

MARY LOU MEERSON

As more and more teachers, schools, districts and states move toward the integrated, literature-based curriculum, many people are very willing to tell teachers what they "ought" to be doing. The more common pieces of advice are to integrate the language arts, as in the preceding lesson; integrate across the curriculum, by using themes; and to use literature as models for students' writing.

Let's look at that last piece of advice more closely. Exactly how, when and why does one use literature, or trade books, as models for student writing? Does all modeling look alike? Which books are best to use? Is there one sure-fire technique to be used with all titles?

The answers are as varied as the titles in your library, and the objectives in your curriculum guide. Here are a few situations in which the use of literature can be very helpful to the novice writer.

To begin at the beginning, with Pre-Kindergarten or Kindergarten children, we use books to build schema. What is a book? What does it look like? What kinds of information or stories are in books? How are books organized? What kinds of words are used in books (book talk)? Of course, we are working on all these objectives every time we read a book to children, or encourage them to "read" one to us. But we can also advance these objectives by having very young children write books, based on those they have enjoyed reading. In order to write their own books, these students will pay special attention to where a book begins, and ends; they will want their words and pictures to look right on the page, and to sound right when read aloud (by themselves or others).

After enjoying Ira Sleeps Over or Corduroy several times, students will be ready to draw a picture of their favorite toy, and perhaps add a word or two of description (scribed by adults). When bound together, this themed book will become community property in the classroom, and read many, many times. The same technique can be used after reading First Comes Spring, with a book about the signs of spring that individual children have seen; Let's Be Enemies can be followed by a book about "My Best Friend"; or The Very Hungry Caterpillar could generate a class book of "My Favorite Food".

Beginning with the very youngest children in your school, and continuing on through the oldest in your school, this schema building about books can continue at appropriate levels of sophistication. There are many books ABOUT books, at all grade levels, that can assist children in many ways.

The familiar HAROLD AND THE PURPLE CRAYON still comforts and inspires children who are unsure about their own talent and ability to put something meaningful on paper. To young children, the pictures are much more important than the words in their own writing, and they love seeing Harold create a whole world with just his purple crayon. SIMON'S BOOK is a wonderful opportunity for students to purge some of their own fears about what happens when they're asleep. Do ink blots, or other more sinister items, come to life? A class book of "While We Slept" usually turns out to be one of the more creative and imaginative projects of the year. CHERRIES AND CHERRY PITS tells a delightful story about a very young artist who is encouraged in all her endeavors by an adult artist. Those of you who work with young children have seen the phenomenon of "talking the picture". The child may only be making some dots on a piece of paper, but will tell you solemnly what those dots really are, how they look, and what they're doing. The young artist in this book also "talks" her pictures. This is a perfect opportunity for the teacher to ask each student to "tell" his or her picture to the class. Aliki, in HOW A BOOK IS MADE takes the complicated processes of actual book production and explains and illustrates them. Students will read and write with a deeper appreciation of the production and effort that goes into all written work after reading this book. And, finally, for older students, WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS? by Sandy Asher, asks exactly that question of some of our best loved children's authors and illustrators.

It seems as though, as teachers, we are constantly stressing originality, and telling students to use "their own words" or "their own ideas". And yet, there is one technique that helps students develop that personal voice, that is based on copying. This technique is called "copy change", and actually uses an author's words or story as the basis for a very similar story by a student, or class. Generally, we use copy change exercises either with very young children, or with very difficult text. With young children, writing "their own" version of a published text builds their confidence. They can, indeed, put words on paper and have them sound pretty good! In a Whole Language classroom, you may hear the teacher call this an innovation on a story. Some typical copy change exercises are 1) Rewrite ROSIE'S WALK using some other animal, or changing Rosie's path. 2)Write THE NAPPING HOUSE as if it were called THE LAUGHING HOUSE.
3) Rewrite THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR using a child as the main character. With older students, we often give them "formulae" to follow for poems (cinquain, haiku), ask them to rewrite dated language to be more understandable (Declaration of Independence) or to attempt to write short passages in the "style" of various authors (write the same event as Hemingway and Dickens would have written it).

Very young children are often very confident in their own writing ability. This seems to erode as students grow older, and less secure. They become more self-conscious about everything, including their writing. As students move into the middle grades, we can ease some of these anxieties by providing lots of direct information, and "how to" practice. As students become less willing to share their pictures or illustrations, we can help them by using books such as HOW TO DRAW CARTOONS. The wonderful FUNNY SIDE UP actually teaches students HOW to make up riddles and knock-knocks. THE HINK PINK BOOK and HOW TO WRITE SECRET CODES will also bolster the confidence of students who protest that they can't write anything.

As we move into a formal writing program, one of the most common types of writing to be assessed (tested) at all levels is the autobiographical incident. This item is ubiquitous because many people assume it must be the easiest kind of writing; after all, you're writing about yourself. What could be easier? Students, however, often take the opposite view. Using these titles as examples of autobiography, and then discussing what was included, and how it was approached should lead to improvements in completing this assignment: SARAH, PLAIN AND TALL, A SPECIAL TRADE, TO BE A SLAVE, and DIARY OF ANNE FRANK.

You can also use trade books to illustrate, teach and allow student practice in some literary devices. For instance, letters which are used to move the plot forward, or as the only content of a book, have been used for centuries. In fact, there's one on the best-seller list right now: S, by John Updike. Books that students will enjoy, and which help them understand and use this device are:THE JOLLY POSTMAN, SARAH, PLAIN AND TALL, DEAR MR. HENSHAW, and TO BE A SLAVE. Another common literary device is to write in the form of a diary. This can be illustrated by using THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK, and TO BE A SLAVE. Focusing student attention on descriptions is often best approached by improving observation skills. Many non-fiction or content area books are appropriate, including such titles as GOBS OF GOO, or SCIENCE EXPERIMENTS YOU CAN EAT. Perhaps then they can concentrate on the content, style and purpose of the descriptions in SARAH, PLAIN AND TALL. Science fiction is also fertile ground for literary devices such as description, flashbacks, foreshadowing and symbolism.

Another common objective of language arts programs is for students to become familiar with literary genre, and to be able to write in some of those styles. Before a student is ever asked to reproduce a genre, or type of literature, he or she must have many, many exposures to it, and must be very familiar not only with a variety of content, but also with the structure or identifying marks of that genre. It is not enough that children have read many fairy tales. They must also know the most common settings, characters, plot lines, beginnings and endings before they should be asked to write one. They should have compared several versions of the same story, and different types of tales.

Good background for fables are both Aesop's and Lobel's FABLES. A new poetry collection, I SAID TO SAM, provides a nice addition to Shel Silverstein and Jack Prelutsky. To prepare students to write a circle story, have them read ONE FINE DAY, THE JAPANESE STONE CUTTER, THE FISHERMAN AND HIS WIFE, and IF YOU GIVE A MOUSE A COOKIE.

You can also have students write book extensions. For instance:

- -write a prologue or an epilogue to a particular book
- -write a thumbnail sketch of the main character 10 years from the date of the end of the book
- -change the setting (either the time or the place). How will this affect the plot?
- -write a new adventure for a well-known character, such as Pecos Bill
- -add a chapter or incident to the "body" of a book that would be believable because it remained true to the characters and plot line. (Example: THE DOLLY SISTERS GO WEST).

As you begin looking at books in this new way, you will see dozens of student writing opportunities leaping out at you. As Marie Antoinette might have said, "If they don't like to write, let them write books".

USING TRADE BOOKS AS MODELS FOR STUDENT WRITING

Mary Lou Meerson

Ahlberg, Janet and Allan. THE JOLLY POSTMAN or OTHER PEOPLE'S LETTERS. Little, Brown and Company, 1986. (letters, alternate viewpoints of fairy tales).

Burns, Marilyn and Weston, Martha. THE HINK PINK BOOK. Little, Brown and Company, 1981. (Word games. Can build to Hinky-Pinky and Hinkety-Pinkety).

Cobb, Vicki. GOBS OF GOO. Lippincott, 1983. (descriptions, observations, notes on science experiments).

Crary, Elizabeth. I CAN'T WAIT: A CHILDREN'S PROBLEM SOLVING BOOK. Parenting Press, Seattle, WA, 1982. (Identify problems, create and try out alternative solutions, use unique format).

Hoff, Syd. HOW TO DRAW CARTOONS. Scholastic, 1975.

Johnson, Crockett. HAROLD AND THE PURPLE CRAYON. Scholastic, 1959. (motivation, illustration).

Lester, Julius. TO BE A SLAVE. Scholastic, 1968. (diaries, letters, descriptive details).

Lobel, Arnold. FABLES. Harper and Row. 1980.

Lobel, Arnold. FROG AND TOAD TOGETHER. Harper and Row, 1972. (lists, dreams, dialogues).

Molnar, Gwen. I SAID TO SAM. Scholastic, 1987. (patterns for a variety of rhythms and ideas for poems).

Numeroff, Laura. IF YOU GIVE A MOUSE A COOKIE. Harper and Row, 1985. (circle stories).

Thaler, Mike. FUNNY SIDE UP! Scholastic, 1985. (riddles, knock-knocks, etc.).

Wittman, S. A SPECIAL TRADE. Harper & Row, 1978. (autobiography).

ABSTRACT

INTEGRATING THE LANGUAGE ARTS: ALTERNATIVES AND STRATEGIES
USING TRADE BOOKS AS MODELS FOR STUDENT WRITING

This talk was given at the International Reading Association's 1988 annual conference, on May 4, 1988, at Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

As many teachers, districts and states move toward an integrated language arts curriculum, based on literature as the major content, many people seem very willing to tell teachers WHAT to do, but not necessarily HOW to do. One of the most common WHATs is that teachers are often told to use literature, or trade books, as a model for student writing. But what does that mean, exactly? This paper presents some categories and objectives of student writing which lend themselves well to using literature models, and also some specific examples of book titles and how to use them.

This talk was preceded by one which presented a model of an integrated lesson, based on a poem.

Mary Lou Meerson
San Diego State University
San Diego, CA